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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

## Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4905

November 3, 1999

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Hon. William Kennard  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW, 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20554

CC DOCKET: 92-105

Dear Chairman Kennard:

We are writing in support of the petition filed by the 211 Collaborative, asking the FCC to designate "211" as the three-digit access number for non-emergency community services referrals throughout the United States.

A simple, reliable, universally recognizable access number can make all the difference for a person in need. Families facing homelessness, hunger, job dislocation, substance abuse, or other community services needs often do not know where to turn. Though government and community-based providers work hard on outreach and education, people in need can often only guess at which providers can address their problems. If the initial guess is wrong, a person may be referred several times before reaching an organization that can provide the necessary services.

Designating 211 as a universal access number for community service referrals would end the guessing game and ensure that American families will get the help they need as soon as possible. The 211 number can fill the gap that exists between easy and speedy access to emergency services and help with other urgent, non-police needs. It can also help to reduce the number of inappropriate calls to 911. Like 911 and 411, 211 would also become part of our popular culture, and as public awareness grew, the number itself would become an outreach tool that would help community service agencies to reach more families in need.

As you know, proponents of the establishment of a 211 community services referral access number have also pursued the issue at the state level. Every year, Connecticut's 23-year-old Infoline service guides close to 200,000 callers to the services they need. United Way 211 in Atlanta has served about 170,000 callers a year in 13 Georgia counties since 1997. Since these services began using 211 as a universal resource number for community services referrals, both have seen call volume increases of nearly 40%. Careful outreach and public education efforts have helped to avoid problematic confusion with the 911 emergency access code. The movement to make 211 the universal number for access to community services is also growing in several other states including Wisconsin, Georgia, Texas, Massachusetts,

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Michigan, Idaho, Rhode Island, Florida, Alabama, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, California, Virginia and Utah. Unfortunately, some state governments have declined to designate 211 for statewide use as a community services referral resource, citing the pending 211 Collaborative petition and arguing that the ultimate decision must rest with the FCC.

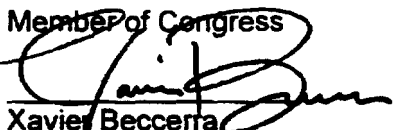
Designating 211 as a nationwide community services referral access code makes sense. It would make life less difficult for countless American families already facing desperate circumstances, and it would help people to avoid falling through the cracks. 211 would also help our country's community service agencies do their work more efficiently and connect more effectively with prospective clients. We encourage the FCC to carefully consider this petition as an important opportunity to make it easier our nation's most vulnerable citizens find the help they need.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our thoughts on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration of the 211 Collaborative's petition.


Sincerely,



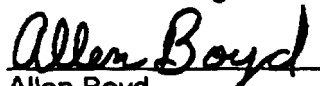
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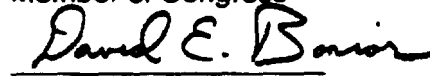
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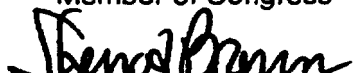
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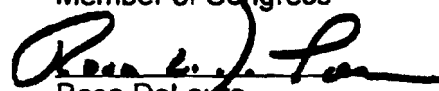
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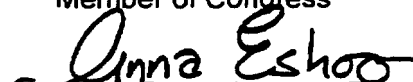
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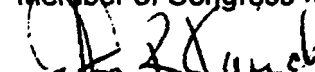
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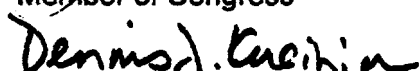
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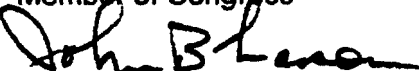
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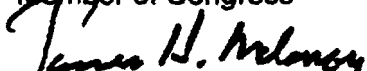
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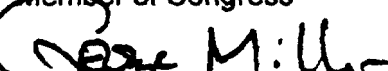
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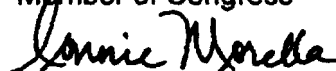
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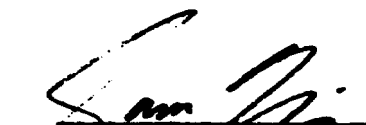
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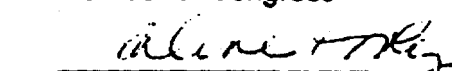
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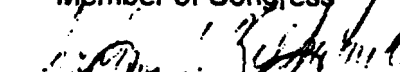
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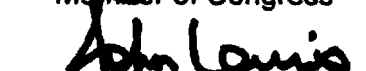
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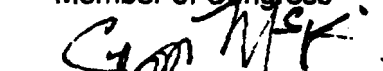
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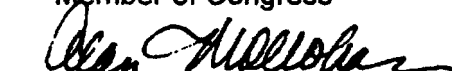
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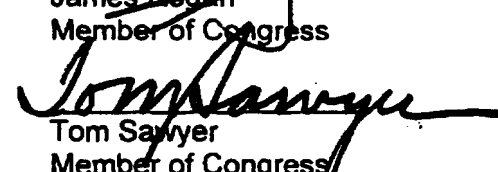


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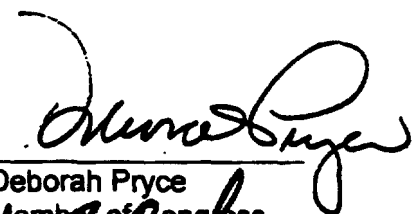
  
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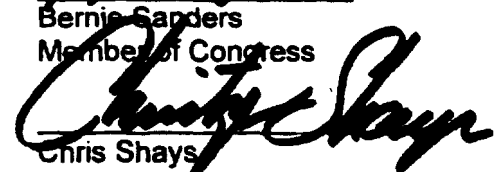
  
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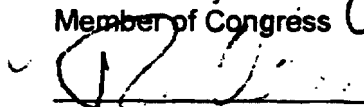
  
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